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126

Assistant Secretary's Daily Activity Report
Office of Andean Affairs
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VENEZUELA

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(U) Baseball and Politics: President Chávez's failure to attend the Caribbean Baseball Series despite the fact that his beloved Caracas Magallanes are representing Venezuela has sparked a number of rumors about the president's willingness to appear in public. Chávez opponents Caracas Metropolitan Mayor Alfredo Peña, former Carabobo State Governor Henrique Salas Romer, and current Carabobo State Governor Henrique Salas Feo (the son of Salas Romer) have been applauded by the crowd. Ambassador Hrinak, Embassy Caracas' resident baseball fanatic, has also received warm applause. Allegedly, the high number of empty seats at these normally standing-room-only games is due to *Chavistas* who purchased tickets hoping Chávez would show up. The flip side of this rumor is that Chávez would not attend because his supporters could not buy up all the tickets thereby ensuring an enthusiastic Bolivarian welcome. There is one Chávez attending the games -- Magallanes player Ende Chávez. Each time Ende is at bat, the crowd chants, "Ende, Sí. Chávez, no." For those Caribbean baseball fanatics: Mexico is leading the series having gone undefeated in four games. (*Caracas Baseball Fanatic/Naranjo e-mail*)

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420